

TMT Notes
Prepared by the Corps of Engineers

May 25, 2005
10:30 – 11:30

Attendees: Dave Wills, Ron Boyce, Margaret Filardo, Dave Benner, Liz Hamilton, Tom Lorz, Jennifer Miller, Holly Critz, Greg Hoffman, Bob Hallock, Cindy Henriksen, Nic Lane, Paul Wagner, Larry Beck, Karl Kanbergs, Ray Gonzales, Julie Ammann, Rudd Turner, Tony Norris.

Sturgeon Pulse:

Dave Wills provided a summary of why the sturgeon pulse request had been modified. Weather conditions had changed the expected temperatures in the river to make them colder than expected. These colder temperatures affect the sturgeon in river and at the hatchery. The original proposal (SOR #2005-FWS-1) had the project ramping flows down from 25 kcfs to 15 kcfs (over 2 days) and then increasing back up to 20 kcfs for 2 more days. Dave explained that the originally requested reduction over the weekend to 15 kcfs would increase temperatures slightly, only to drop them again when flow was increased back up to 20 kcfs. The new proposal is to go from 25 kcfs to a flat flow of 17 to 18 kcfs this weekend to avoid the temperature fluctuations. After June 2, Libby will go to a flat flow greater than minimum bull trout flows of 7 kcfs and will be determined after discussions with NOAA Fisheries.

Cindy responded that we would need to exceed BiOp ramping rates to drop from 25 to 18 kcfs in one day, but that she and Bob Hallock had agreed to drop Libby flow from 25 to 20 kcfs at 1800 hrs, Friday, May 27 and drop to 18 kcfs at 0600 hrs, 28 May and hold that flow through 0600 hrs on June 2. After June 2, in order to draft the project to 2439 ft by the end of August, the Corps was expecting flows to be between 14 and 18 kcfs depending on the expected residual runoff. The Corps will determine what flat flow is appropriate.

(SOR #2005-14) Spring Spill Operations at John Day Dam.

Dave Wills introduced the latest SOR on John Day spill. He indicated that the current operation was not going as anticipated. He described the goal of the SOR to reshape spill at JDA to increase juvenile passage. The SOR described a minimum of 120 kcfs spill at John Day around the clock and ensure compliance with the 60% nighttime spill and 40% daytime spill. The SOR justifies a spill of greater than 120 kcfs because of potentially lower TDG levels above this threshold (high TDG "dead zone" between 85 and 120 kcfs). The SOR is requesting that these flows continue for the first few weeks of June to benefit fish. Dave would like to see a 90% passage index.

Cindy responded that the Corps and BPA implemented an operation based on the request from last week (SOR #2005-12 Amended) beginning on Friday, May 20. Due to high flows and high TDG in the river, the operation had to be modified Saturday to go to 60% at night and 0 spill during the day. John Day was unable to go to 40% spill, or even

to 30% as it was restricted by the gas cap during the day on Saturday, and since the project had been instructed not to spill less than 30%, spill was dropped to 0 for the day. Cindy sent an email out to the Salmon Managers on Monday explaining the reduction in spill. Cindy reported that spill levels were back to the 40% day and 60% night by Sunday, with gas cap limits of 145 kcfs at night and 85 kcfs during the day.

Dave Benner, Margaret Filardo and Dave Wills suggested that flows at John Day could have been adjusted better to get closer to the 40% and 60% levels from Friday through yesterday.

Cindy reminded everyone that the point of the spill operation was to move out-migrating fish through the John Day pool, and she asked Paul Wagner for an update on overall fish outmigration. Wagner provided an update on juvenile fish passage stating that yearling chinook passage on the Snake River was winding down. Paul pointed out the John Day passage numbers dropped from 50,000 when the project was not spilling during the day, to between 10,000 to 25,000 when John Day started daytime spill. Paul did not know if this was due to the run falling off or project operations. Paul noted a similar pattern for Steelhead at John Day. At McNary, the yearling chinook are tracking pretty closely with the historical runs, although 2005 maybe a week behind them. Historically fish numbers drop off dramatically at the end of May into June. Steelhead migration at McNary is shifted somewhat with the peak migration between 15 -20 May as compared to the historical peak between 07 - 15 May. At Bonneville the steelhead run appears to be shifted 2 weeks later than historical runs. Historically the run ends the first week in June. At Bonneville, yearling Chinook out migration for 2005 is tracking with historical run timing.

After Paul's report on fish, several folks (Dave, Margaret and Ron) summarized that we are still seeing a substantial number of fish in the river and concluded that extending the spill into the second week of June tied in with historical fish passage timing.

Ron Boyce expressed his opinion that adding more spill at John Day (a minimum of 120 kcfs around the clock) would help make up for the 800 kaf of missing spill at The Dalles due to the pendant operation this year. Cindy noted that the Corps is currently complying with the in-place 40% day and 60% nighttime spill operation. Cindy clarified that the operation at John Day last week and this week was not considered "make-up" spill and Dave Wills agreed that there is no accounting for lost spill taking place. Dave Wills clarified that the proposed SOR was crafted because the "minimum" operation at John Day as requested in the Biop and UPA could not be achieved

Cindy then went on to update the TMT group on a new development at The Dalles that is further affecting the Corps ability to spill 40%. The project has a dam safety issue with the stilling basin when river velocities are greater than 20 feet per second (ft/s). Last week gates 1 and 2 were open to 12', while gates 3 through 6 were open to the 8' pendant. With the higher opening at gates 1 and 2 and the high flows, The Dalles reached the 300 hr threshold with velocities greater than 20 ft/s and gates 1 and 2

needed to be lowered to 8' openings. This was scheduled to occur today, May 25 at 1300 hrs. The project will now be spilling 72 kcfs as opposed to the 80 kcfs with the higher opening.

Paul asked Cindy if any additional information on the status of the stilling basin could be gleaned from last year, like acoustic measurements to check the status of the stilling basin. Cindy replied that the Corps could send in divers again but that would require spill to be shut off for 1 day. Also, as a heads up, when river flow drops below 150 kcfs and gates 3-6 need to be dropped from 8' to 6' pendants then we will also need to stop spill for 1 day for the dive inspection.

Cindy asked for comments from NOAA Fisheries on the proposed SOR since they were not signatories to the request.

Paul stated that he wasn't clear if the new SOR would achieve the objectives. The current SOR calls for a flat flow of 120 kcfs minimum, which could result in the project spilling 50% around the clock. He also pointed out that TDG was a concern. Paul felt that the Sunday operation went well even though the project was not always at 40% during the day. Paul also pointed out that NOAA Fisheries agreed to 7 days of daytime spill at John Day and not an open-ended operation like this current SOR requests.

Nic Lane thought that the process on the previous Thursday went well and that discussions ended in a good compromise. BPA is concerned about the John Day spill operation going on indefinitely. Nic also pointed out that holding a flat flow around the clock is difficult, especially during the holiday weekend and that BPA is currently scheduling load through the weekend.

Margaret pointed out again that the Action Agencies did not achieve the goals of the 40 and 60% spill levels, per last week's SOR, except for a few hours over the past several days. Margaret feels that the 80 kcfs daytime gas cap at John Day is the limiting factor. Ron agreed that the region did not meet the objectives of getting additional spill over the weekend.

Liz Hamilton wanted to comment that it seemed inconsistent that the Action Agencies were keeping track of lost dollars relating to spill, but that they will not keep an accounting of spill for the BiOp.

Nic continued the discussion on the SOR stating that BPA would be willing to continue spill through Monday but that BPA was uncomfortable with flattening the flows. Cindy stated that with the news that The Dalles spill would need to be limited even more, and to enhance the biological benefit for fish, the Corps would work with BPA to continue the 60/40% spill levels through Monday. She added that inflows should be dropping off, which will help the Corps meet the 40% daytime spill at John Day.

Wills, Filardo and Benner reiterated their desire for the higher 120 kcfs flow.

Dave Wills commented on the Action Agencies proposed operation that spill at John Day will provide a benefit to fish. He commented that he would like to see the John Day spill continued beyond Monday, May 30 and that he would like to see the Action Agencies do a better job at meeting the 60 and 40% levels.

Nic also suggested that if flows and loads after Monday result in involuntary spill, that John Day could be moved further up the spill priority list. Paul Wagner was going to check with Gary Fredericks to see if NOAA Fisheries was OK with this proposal.

Cindy Henriksen concluded that spill will stop at John Day at the end of Monday unless there is some involuntary spill. She also said that the Corps would continue reviewing the gas caps.

Wills noted that the Salmon Managers will have their weekly discussion Tuesday and that if anything significant develops they will call the Corps.